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Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to resolutions 1653 (2006) and 1663 (2006)

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 8 of resolution 1663 (2006), in which the Security Council, inter alia, recalled its request that I make proposals on how United Nations agencies and missions, in particular the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS), could more effectively address the problem of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).

I. Background

2. Since it began in the mid-1980s, the conflict in northern Uganda has affected Kitgum, Gulu and Pader districts of "Acholiland", Lango subregion and, to a lesser extent, Teso subregion. For 20 years, northern Uganda has been known for the continuous violence unleashed on the people by LRA, which has resulted in human tragedy, chronic insecurity, lawlessness, serious human rights violations, marginalization and the impoverishment of vast segments of the population. In the 1990s, LRA was alleged to have moved its activities into southern Sudan and later, into the area of the Garamba National Park in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which borders on Western Equatoria state of the Sudan.

3. For two decades, LRA has inflicted enormous suffering, mostly on the Acholi community, the very ethnic group on whose behalf it claims to be fighting. It has caused the displacement of around 2 million people, the majority of whom fled within their own sub-counties, and 1.5 million of whom continue to live in seriously overcrowded camp settings. An estimated 100,000 people are reported to have died as a result of the prolonged conflict.

4. In contrast to the situation in the rest of the country, basic socio-economic indicators in the areas affected by LRA have worsened during the prolonged period of the conflict. Access to water, sanitation, health, justice and education is more restricted in northern Uganda than in other parts of the country, while indicators of poverty, environmental degradation and HIV/AIDS are higher. The population has been unable to engage in productive economic activities and, as a result, has become increasingly dependent on external aid. Throughout the years of the LRA insurgency, living conditions have considerably deteriorated, while opportunities for survival through traditional mechanisms have diminished.

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5. There is a lack of credible information on the strength and capacity of LRA. Although its forces are believed to have diminished over the past years, LRA remains active in the border regions between the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda and southern Sudan. Despite its reduced numbers, it presents a real threat to the rule of law and adds to the existing security problems in the Great Lakes region, which are compounded, inter alia, by the breakdown of local authority and law enforcement mechanisms. The extended period of breakdown in the rule of law and in the civilian administration of justice in the LRA-affected areas in northern Uganda, as well as excessive reliance on poorly trained armed forces, such as local defence units, has further exacerbated the security situation and undermined the trust of the population of northern Uganda in the will and ability of the Government of Uganda to protect them.

6. Given the high level of insecurity prevailing in the LRA-affected areas, it is often difficult to distinguish between LRA attacks and acts of banditry committed by disaffected armed elements and common criminals. It should be noted that attacks by LRA are at their lowest recorded levels in several years and there is evidence of its diminished military capacity.

7. While the exact strength of LRA is unknown, it appears to represent currently no more than several hundred active combatants, and does not seem to be a credible military force. However, it has a proven ability to regroup and continue committing atrocities. Furthermore, LRA remains a violent criminal group with a severe disruptive capacity against the civilian population within its reach, humanitarian convoys in the area and personnel of the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), UNMIS and other United Nations programmes, funds and agencies operating in the Great Lakes region. I share the view of the Security Council that, as such, LRA should be regarded as a threat to regional peace.

8. The United Nations has been deeply concerned about LRA activities. Efforts have been made to address them within existing capabilities and in strict compliance with the mandates of the United Nations programmes, agencies and missions operating in Uganda and in the Great Lakes region. Such efforts are carried out without prejudice to the responsibility of the Government of Uganda to protect civilians and address the challenges created by the criminal activities and the human rights abuses committed by LRA. In that regard, I was encouraged by the efforts of the Government of Uganda as reflected in its document concerning LRA (S/2006/271).

II. Implications of the activities of the Lord's Resistance Army

9. According to the Commission on Human Rights, the conflict in northern Uganda has been marked by gross abuses of human rights and continuous violations of international humanitarian law by all sides.

10. The fundamental rights to life, liberty and personal safety are among the most consistently violated. Throughout the two decades of its insurgency, LRA has made the civilian population the target of most of its activity. Although significantly reduced, LRA violence against civilians continues, including abductions of children and adults, extrajudicial killings and sexual and gender-based violence, mostly rape and torture. Human rights violations by the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) and their auxiliary forces also continue to be reported. Irregular salary

payments to the Government security forces, in particular the local defence units referred to as the "Arrow Boys" in Teso and "Amuka" in Lango, have also contributed to abuses. The majority of these cases are not reported because of fear of reprisals, lack of concrete evidence and distrust of the existing judicial system. However, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is currently investigating a number of such cases alleging abuses against civilians by security forces. One of the most alarming facts of life for civilians in the LRA-affected areas is the widespread use of torture. Former LRA abductees regularly speak of mistreatment during captivity, including severe beating and physical and psychological torture. Several reports of abuse have also been obtained from civilians detained by the security forces.

11. In 1996, the Government initiated, as a temporary measure, the displacement of the civilian population into protected camps in "Acholiland", to ensure their safety against the LRA incursions and, most important, to protect children from abductions. Ten years later, the internally displaced population remains in over 200 camps, under curfew and with limited freedom of movement within a designated security perimeter around the camp. In addition, civilian policing and judicial institutions are weak and sometimes non-existent in the remote rural areas of northern Uganda. Their accessibility is extremely limited for security, logistical and economic reasons. Numerous civilians interviewed in recent years by human rights observers have also questioned their impartiality.

12. The duration and conditions of encampment of the internally displaced persons present a unique challenge to the enjoyment of rights. The inability of the displaced to participate in decisions regarding their own future and to make an informed judgement, especially about security risks at their places of origin, has been a serious concern.

13. The conflict in northern Uganda has also transformed traditional gender roles in households and communities. The role of men in the family has been undermined, but the traditional tasks of women have remained unchanged. Additionally, in some cases, women are assuming the role of heads of household. More than a quarter of households in the camps for internally displaced persons in northern Uganda are headed by women. There is an increasing sense of frustration, especially on the part of the male population, which can no longer protect families, and this frustration often turns into anger and increased domestic violence against women.

14. Women and girls in the LRA-affected areas have been subjected to various forms of sexual and gender-based violence such as rape, forced marriage, enslavement, killings, torture, mutilation and starvation. Approximately 1,000 girls have returned from the bush with children conceived by LRA males. In addition to abuses by LRA, women are also reportedly harassed by Government security forces. Lack of civilian police trained in addressing sexual violence and exploitation, an inadequate legal framework, the absence of medical and psychological prevention and support services, and social barriers explain the reluctance of the victims to report violence of a sexual nature. Furthermore, reporting and referral mechanisms for women and girls are non-existent in internally displaced persons camps and, in rape cases, the absence of Government health facilities authorized to issue the legally required medical certificate to the victim is a significant obstacle to reporting and investigations.

15. Children continue to be the victims of violence and abuse by LRA in northern Uganda and southern Sudan. Neither the Government of Uganda nor the communities and families can protect their children against the horrible violence perpetrated by LRA. Despite a significant reduction in 2005 and 2006, child abductions by LRA continue to take place. On the other hand, the number of children and young people escaping from LRA has also significantly declined. There were 57 new arrivals in reception centres in April 2006, compared to 727 in April 2004. Initially, the phenomenon of "night commuting" among children was a response to LRA abductions. More recently, the motivation of children walking long distances on a daily basis to find safe haven has become more complex and is often related to the lack of protection within dysfunctional family structures. It is estimated that 20,000 abductees of all ages have returned home. However, the conflict has ruptured the social fabric. Its most appalling ramification is the failure of the families and the communities to reabsorb former abductees and children born in captivity.

16. Illiteracy, malnutrition and diseases are also prevalent among children, particularly in the internally displaced persons camps. There is a lack of basic social amenities and infrastructure, which has made the quality of life in the camps deplorable. Not surprisingly, the mortality rate is well above the emergency threshold in camps across northern Uganda.

17. The activities of LRA have hampered the efforts by the international community to respond to natural and man-made disasters in the region. Humanitarian operations, particularly efforts to reach the population in need in northern Uganda and southern Sudan, have been seriously affected. Vast swathes of the LRA-affected areas lack critical health-care systems, including provision of basic service and vaccinations. Return and reintegration of the returnees could be supported only in a spontaneous manner.

III. Assessment of United Nations missions and capabilities

A. United Nations Mission in the Sudan

18. UNMIS has been deployed with the objective of supporting the parties in the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 9 January 2005. In the security area, the Mission's current mandate is limited by resolution 1590 (2005) to the following tasks:

(a) To observe and monitor the movement of Sudanese armed groups and the redeployment of forces in the areas of UNMIS deployment in accordance with the ceasefire agreement;

(b) To help establish the necessary security conditions, within its capabilities and in its areas of deployment, for the voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons and for humanitarian assistance;

(c) Acting under Chapter VII of the Charter, to take necessary action, in the areas of its deployment and as it deems within its capabilities and without prejudice to the responsibility of the Sudanese authorities, to protect United Nations and other personnel, including civilians under imminent threat of physical violence.

19. With such a mandate, UNMIS operates with the usual Chapter VI force composition and configuration and has very few robust assets at its disposal. The military component is structured to provide support and security for monitoring and verification of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, rather than to conduct operations which may require an offensive capability. Further, the 700 UNMIS soldiers spread thinly in 10 locations throughout Equatoria — an area the size of Austria — are essentially deployed to provide protection to United Nations installations and personnel and military escort to United Nations military observers and logistics, mine clearance, contingent-owned equipment and humanitarian convoys. The sector's air assets are currently limited to three transport helicopters, which do not have an attack capability. The aviation unit for that sector, which will provide additional transport capacity, is still arriving in the Mission area.

20. In resolution 1663 (2006), the Council urged UNMIS to "make full use of its current mandate and capabilities" against LRA. The present configuration of UNMIS allows the Mission to undertake regular patrolling by military observers, in known LRA areas. These patrols are escorted by small protection elements which, due to their size, scope and mandate, are limited to carrying out a minimum defensive capability.

21. It should also be recalled that the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (section 12 of the permanent ceasefire protocol) expressly states that the parties to the Agreement would assume full responsibility for dealing with foreign armed groups. Any robust operation against LRA or other foreign armed groups within the UNMIS operational area would need to be agreed upon with the parties to the Agreement. Such an activity would require an expanded mandate, but also an enhanced configuration of forces and more robust assets, specialized equipment and real-time intelligence.

22. With regard to the LRA threat in the Equatoria region of southern Sudan, UNMIS initiated in August 2005 an informal arrangement which has allowed it to meet regularly with the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) to liaise and share information collected by the United Nations military observe, patrols. Weekly joint coordination meetings are held with both military organizations. As UNMIS becomes fully deployed in Equatoria, it will be in a position to further enhance intramission information-sharing and develop a consistent approach to dealing with the LRA issue, including in its security, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and related puolic information aspects. The Mission will also enhance its capacity to share information with MONUC and with the United Nations country team in Uganda on the LRA matters relevant to those parties. UNMIS also meets regularly with Ugandan diplomats and the UPDF coordination office in Juba.

23. As provided for in the memorandum of understanding between the Governments of the Sudan and Uganda, which also includes the Government of Southern Sudan, UPDF operates in Equatoria against LRA, and is backed by air support. However, the memorandum of understanding expired earlier this year and has not yet been renewed. The combined strength of the SAF, SPLA and UPDF military presence in the Equatoria region is estimated at 50,000 personnel. By comparison, UNMIS has around 700 troops and a small reserve capacity.

24. Overall, the LRA threat is one aspect of general insecurity in Equatoria. There have been a number of attacks allegedly perpetrated by LRA since the start of 2006.

It should be noted, however, that it is difficult to distinguish between LRA attacks and acts of banditry committed by non-LRA elements in the area. On 19 March, a group of some 80 to 150 armed individuals, believed to be LRA elements, attacked four installations in the town of Yambio, near the Sudanese border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo, engaging the small 37-strong Bangladeshi contingent. At the same time, they raided locations of non-governmental organizations in search of communications equipment and supplies. Following the recent deterioration of the security situation, UNMIS has restricted movements without armed escort in southern Sudan, which has obviously affected the delivery of humanitarian assistance and the return of internally displaced persons and refugees and has had a very negative impact on the lives of southern Sudanese.

25. UNMIS has no mandate to arrest and can only detain individuals who attack, or threaten to attack, United Nations personnel or installations or local populations within the immediate vicinity of United Nations installations. The capabilities of that particular United Nations mission to provide protection should be also taken into account. Detainees would have to be immediately handed over to the Sudanese authorities. While the Sudan is not a State party to the Rome Statute, it has signed a memorandum of understanding with the International Criminal Court pledging to hand over the indicted LRA leaders to The Hague.

B. United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

26. Apart from its deadly attack on MONUC personnel that resulted in casualties among MONUC peacekeepers, including eight fatalities, in January 2006, LRA appears to be inactive in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. There are indications that following the redeployment to the Democratic Republic of the Congo of a group headed by Commander Vincent Otti, other LRA leaders may be relocating to Garamba National Park and the border area between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and southern Sudan, seeking a safe haven. It is also believed that Joseph Kony is currently in the same area, although he was reported to be in southern Sudan in May 2006. His presence in southern Sudan may explain the alleged LRA attack on the outskirts of the city of Juba in June 2006, which killed nine civilians.

27. Through resolution 1565 (2004) and subsequent resolutions, MONUC is mandated, inter alia, to use force to deter attacks that could threaten the political process and to ensure the protection of civilians. Acting in support of the Government of National Unity and Transition of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it should also assist the Congolese authorities in the maintenance of order; contribute to the improvement of the security conditions in which humanitarian assistance is provided; support operations of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) to disarm foreign combatants; contribute to the successful completion of the electoral process by assisting in the establishment of a secure environment for free, transparent and peaceful elections; assist in the promotion and protection of human rights; and continue to cooperate with efforts to ensure that those responsible for serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law are brought to justice.

28. As the elections approach, the highest operational priority will have to be accorded to promoting a secure environment for the electoral process. This task will

temporarily limit the extent to which MONUC assets could be dedicated to pursuing foreign armed groups such as LRA, which is not assessed as being able to disrupt the electoral process in a major way. It should be recalled that security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo continues to suffer from thousands of Mayi-Mayi groups terrorizing the population in Katanga, thousands of troops of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda doing the same in the Kivus and the activities of rogue armed groups in Ituri. Protecting and ensuring the security of the population in those areas remains a very challenging task for FARDC and MONUC, with the limited capacity available to them.

29. In this connection, the MONUC military presence near Garamba National Park has been redeployed to Bunia to resume military operations against the remnants of the Ituri armed groups. MONUC operations in support of FARDC in LRA-affected areas of the Democratic Republic of the Congo will continue in the near future.

30. FARDC maintains a battalion close to Garamba National Park, which, according to the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is adequate to deal with the LRA threat. MONUC is prepared to provide time-limited logistical support for operations, within its capacity.

31. MONUC is aware of its mandate to detain the LRA leaders who have been indicted by the International Criminal Court, and would seek to do so if it came across them while carrying out its mandated duties. The captured LRA leaders would have to be immediately handed over to the Congolese authorities who, since the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a State party to the Rome Statute and has other agreements with the Court, would then be expected to hand over the suspects for arraignment in The Hague. As mentioned above, joint FARDC-MONUC operations against foreign armed groups, including LRA, will continue insofar as the MONUC capacity and mandate allow.

IV. Observations

32. The implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in southern Sudan enhances the opportunity for peace in northern Uganda. However, peace will not provide all answers to the challenges created during two decades of conflict. Greater efforts by all concerned are required to address the root causes of the conflict in northern Uganda. Building mutual trust at all levels of interaction between the Government and the Acholi community, and supporting the process of reconciliation accepted by all stakeholders would help to counter the likelihood of a relapse into another national crisis.

33. Immediate prospects for a political settlement to the conflict in northern Uganda remain uncertain. While the peace mediation process associated with Betty Bigombe has stalled, international opinion is divided on whether either side will demonstrate sufficient will to seek a political solution.

34. The regional impact of the insurgency is a cause for further concern. LRA attacks and abductions in southern Sudan have slowed humanitarian action and have the potential to undermine the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The engagement between MONUC peacekeepers and LRA in January 2006 in Garamba National Park has underscored the need to further reassess the

security threat created by additional armed groups in the volatile eastern section of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

35. I welcome the renewed engagement of the Government of Uganda and the Security Council to address the situation in the LRA-affected areas. I take note of the briefing to the Council by two senior ministers of the Government of Uganda on 19 April 2006 on the situation created by LRA in the region and their proposals on how best to address it. In view of the recent attacks in southern Sudan and the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, it is urgent to devise a coherent response by all stakeholders to the security threat created by LRA. I would like to reiterate that the solution to the long-running conflict lies in a well-coordinated approach that addresses the root causes of the conflict as well as its regional implications.

36. The crisis in northern Uganda goes beyond the confrontation of LRA with the Ugandan Government and the terror it has unleashed against the civilian population. It has been fuelled, in part, by the general resentment of the population in northern Uganda against perceived economic, political and social exclusion. If left unresolved, the long-standing resentment will continue to reproduce the conditions that gave rise to the initial insurgency in 1986. The primary responsibility to address the situation in northern Uganda, its humanitarian and human rights dimensions, and the underlying political problems, therefore lies with the Government of Uganda.

37. The decision to hold a national dialogue rests with the Government of Uganda. The United Nations stands ready to assist the Government of Uganda in that respect.

38. The fact that five leaders of LRA, including Joseph Kony and Vincent Otti, have been indicted by the International Criminal Court, was believed to have made them less approachable for negotiations. Nevertheless, recent contacts between the Government of Southern Sudan and Messrs. Kony and Otti, with the apparent knowledge of the Government of Uganda, suggest the possibility of a negotiated solution with LRA. However, such contacts also raise the issues of impunity and the responsibility of the Southern Sudanese authorities to apprehend the individuals indicted by the Court.

39. There continues to be a need to develop a credible and attractive disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme that could help the Government of Uganda to address the needs of former combatants, in particular women, minors and people with disabilities. In doing so, it is necessary to ensure that such assistance will promote full reintegration of LRA ex-combatants into the communities of return and not alienate them further by privileging them over other vulnerable groups not associated with the fighting forces.

40. The humanitarian emergency will not be resolved until the necessary security conditions are created on the ground. This would require the building of confidence between the population of northern Uganda and the national army which has been associated with the suffering of these communities.

41. I note with satisfaction the improved cooperation between the external actors and the Government of Uganda on a number of issues critical to the settlement of the conflict in northern Uganda. The launching in Kampala, on 4 May 2006, of the Joint Monitoring Committee is particularly important. It is promising that the Committee, as a mechanism for the implementation of the emergency plan for humanitarian interventions in the LRA-affected areas in northern Uganda, brings together the Government, the donors, the United Nations system and its

humanitarian partners in addressing the immediate requirements for humanitarian assistance and reconciliation in northern Uganda. I urge the Government of Uganda to be fully committed to the implementation of the plan.

42. Despite the launch of the national policy on internally displaced persons by the Government and the commitment from the authorities to develop better mechanisms to address human rights violations in northern Uganda, there remain serious challenges in ensuring protection of the civilians affected by LRA activities. I would encourage the Government, with the support and collaboration of the international community, to provide appropriate resources to adequately implement the national policy on internally displaced persons.

43. The relations between OHCHR and the Government are based on the memorandum of understanding signed during the High Commissioner's visit to Uganda in January 2006. It provides for comprehensive promotion and protection of the OHCHR mandate throughout the country. The relations have so far been constructive, including in terms of dialogue and cooperation on human rights issues in the security sector, such as support for training of the military and the police forces, as well as possibly the administration of the penitentiary system, on human rights issues. In cooperation with the Uganda Human Rights Commission, OHCHR has engaged in establishing civil-military cooperation centres in all districts in northern Uganda, which are intended to enhance the protection of civilians and improve relations between security forces and civilians.

44. The United Nations stands for pacific ways and means of addressing the challenges created by LRA activities in northern Uganda and the Great Lakes region. The military solution to the LRA problem raises serious concern owing to the fact that many of the LRA fighters are abducted children and under-age soldiers who are forced to fight under the threat of death. Negotiating their surrender would be a more appropriate way of dealing with the problem of child combatants and should be the proposed solution.

V. Recommendations

45. Several Member States have called for the establishment of a panel of experts to expose the sources of material and financial support for LRA. I invite Member States and Governments in the region, collectively or in their individual capacity, to examine what possible action they could take in respect of LRA sources of funding. As for the panel of experts, I leave it to the Security Council to decide on the opportuneness of establishing a new mechanism. However, efficient use of the existing panels operating in the region and expanding their mandates to include investigation on the backers and supply channels of LRA could be an option.

46. I also note the commitment of the Government of Uganda and the Core Group countries to finalize the national peace, recovery and development plan for northern Uganda. The plan would incorporate earlier projects for LRA-affected areas and would provide a framework for international involvement in the efforts to address the root causes and the implications of the LRA insurgency. To ensure ownership of the plan and enable it to function as an instrument of peacebuilding, I urge the Government to actively engage the leadership of the affected communities in northern Uganda. I also urge the Security Council to endorse this effort and support the implementation of the plan.

47. The expanded role of the Core Group can provide valuable support for a comprehensive solution on the ground. I encourage the Core Group to continue its active collaboration with the Government of Uganda. I further encourage the member States of the Core Group to strengthen their collaboration and strive for the definition of a unified and comprehensive agenda of assistance to northern Uganda.

48. Furthermore, I urge the Core Group to work with the Government of Uganda on the issues of socio-economic reintegration of former LRA combatants and assistance to internally displaced persons and other affected groups within the broader framework of addressing the plight of the internally displaced communities. It is necessary to pursue a coherent policy to encourage the non-indicted middle and lower ranks of LRA to defect and seek reintegration. Such a policy must build upon the existing Amnesty Act of Uganda, ensuring the safety of former combatants and equal access with other vulnerable groups to opportunities for socio-economic advancement.

49. The Amnesty Commission of Uganda is an appropriate legal mechanism that could offer a number of advantages in addressing the implications of LRA activities. However, the Commission should pursue a robust and pragmatic approach in order to solve the problems and weaknesses related to the amnesty process, and to initiate follow-up activities to address the needs of ex-LRA combatants and the abductees. It would be particularly important to identify, without delay, an appropriate framework and guidelines to assist the Amnesty Commission and its partners in launching and sustaining socio-economic opportunities. The work of the Commission should be based on a solid information management system. Given the disruptive consequences of the LRA insurgency for the civilian population of northern Uganda, strong field capacity, with highly professional advocacy and counselling services, should be created. That would help the communities, families and individuals traumatized by the LRA insurgency to overcome the painful experience and return their lives to normalcy. The United Nations would be prepared to complement such efforts with technical advice and expertise. I would like to stress that without solid donor support, these initiatives may not be implemented in a timely and sustained manner. I therefore appeal to all potential donors to provide immediate support to the efforts of the Amnesty Commission in this area.

50. The idea of appointing a senior-level envoy to help the Government of Uganda to deal with the situation created by the LRA activities has been advocated by some Member States and the community of non-governmental organizations engaged in northern Uganda. President Yoweri Museveni agreed in principle to the idea of a senior-level envoy, but the mandate of such an envoy remains to be agreed upon. The Government of Uganda appears reluctant to accept a special envoy to deal with domestic issues. I would advise that, to be effective, the envoy should work together with the Government of Uganda, with the support of the Core Group and in consultation with other relevant actors, towards a negotiated settlement to the conflict leading to national reconciliation. The envoy should also ensure that the security concerns of the Governments in the region, created by the LRA presence within their borders, are addressed, and their responses are harmonized.

51. While recognizing the threat posed by LRA, I should like to reiterate that, since UNMIS and MONUC already have challenging tasks to perform in their respective areas of responsibility, they should channel their capacities and resources

primarily to address those challenges. UNMIS is in its final stage of deployment, while the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement continues to face considerable difficulties. Furthermore, UNMIS has carried out preliminary planning work for expanding United Nations operations in Darfur and is continuing to prepare for that operation, as called for in Security Council resolution 1679 (2006). MONUC is fully mobilized to support the efforts of the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to organize a credible and violence-free electoral process, which starts at the end of July and will extend at least into September.

52. Dealing with the regional implications of LRA activities lies within the area of national responsibility of the Governments in the region. UNMIS and MONUC can provide assistance, within their existing mandates and capabilities, but should not be seen as an alternative to authorities in the LRA-affected region in the maintenance of law and order.

53. As UNMIS reaches full operational capacity, it will be able, within the existing capabilities and in compliance with its rules of engagement, to establish a more formal framework of ground military patrols with helicopter support, subject to availability, which would provide a secure environment for United Nations operations, facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance and the promotion of human rights and make the area less benign for LRA and for other bandit activity. This could be done notwithstanding the severe operation constraints described above.

54. It should be emphasized that the countries of the region have an overwhelming capacity to address the LRA threat. If the Governments in the region find a mutually agreeable way to strengthen cooperation on the ground among their security forces, it could create a solid basis to deal more effectively with the lingering threat from LRA. However, I would urge them to seek a coherent approach to this challenge, which should be based on strict adherence to the provisions of international law, including respect for the inviolability of the internationally recognized borders and territorial integrity of the States affected by the activities of LRA and other illegal armed groups.

55. In the interest of good-neighbourliness among the countries of the region, the activities of LRA should be subjected to the scrutiny of a reliable mechanism that would help inform national decision makers on a continuous basis. There are already mechanisms in place, such as the "Tripartite Plus", where coordination and collaboration between the Government of Uganda and its neighbours can be strengthened. In addition, the agreement signed in Luanda in September 2002 between President Joseph Kabila of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda provides the basic legal framework for both parties to discuss security concerns at their border areas, and work on a practical collaboration to solve these concerns. I therefore encourage the two Governments to engage in open bilateral discussions to address the present situation. The possibility of a direct engagement of FARDC against the LRA elements illegally present in the Democratic Republic of the Congo could be brought up during the discussions.

56. There is a need for the United Nations agencies to work closely with Member States with the requisite capacity in gathering and sharing more information about LRA. From a security standpoint, accurate and real-time intelligence is essential in limiting and, possibly, preventing LRA activities. UNMIS and MONUC already exchange regular information on LRA at senior mission and sector levels, as well as

through a joint LRA coordination cell. This information-sharing will be extended to the United Nations system in Uganda, where appropriate. I would like to invite Governments with intelligence capacity to share intelligence with the United Nations agencies and Government forces on the ground, through the mechanisms already in place.

57. With regard to information exchange on LRA, the United Nations is of the view that the agreement between SAF, SPLA and UPDF formed the basis of significant cooperation between the primary military entities. An expanded intelligence-sharing forum involving UPDF, SAF, SPLA and FARDC, with the possible participation of the United Nations, would be another way to formalize this cooperation. Such a forum would provide updates on LRA movements, positions, tactics and attacks on a regular basis to all concerned parties.

58. The disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration of LRA elements should be encouraged through the establishment of a formal mechanism. Although the activities of LRA are definitely more oriented towards southern Sudan, we support the establishment of an Amnesty Commission office in Haut-Uele, near the reported presence of LRA in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. It would have a similar purpose as the office that existed in Beni for the demobilization and repatriation of elements of the Allied Democratic Forces/National Army for the Liberation of Uganda. Consideration could be also given to establishing a similar Amnesty Commission office in southern Sudan. In addition, I encourage the Government of Uganda to examine the opportunity of an information campaign which would convey the appropriate DDR messages to the LRA fighters. At the same time, I would like to stress that appropriate funding and strengthened programme delivery need to be expedited in a joint effort of the donors, United Nations agencies, the World Bank and implementing partners.

59. Addressing the situation of children affected by the conflict should be given a true priority. My Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict is in contact with the Government of Uganda and the Core Group on the issue of the reintegration of the LRA child soldiers, and on addressing the situation of abducted minors. The Special Representative, who visited Uganda in June 2006, will continue to focus on these complex matters, to ensure that they remain at the centre of United Nations efforts to address the problem of LRA.

60. Given the magnitude of destruction and underdevelopment in northern Uganda caused by LRA, a focused and comprehensive approach should be taken to help the Ugandan authorities to address the challenges of recovery, rehabilitation and, where possible, sustained development. The United Nations is working closely with those concerned with the economic and social situation in northern Uganda, in the format of the Core Group, and will continue to support the activities of the Joint Monitoring Committee. However, the long-term objectives of redressing the situation in northern Uganda should be dealt with in the context of the peace, recovery and development plan. It is hoped that this plan will help to identify and implement sustainable development initiatives that will improve socio-economic services and opportunities in northern Uganda and lead to more equitable social spending for the north. In that regard, I appeal to the international community, including donors, to maintain coherent and consistent support to Ugandan authorities during its development and implementation.